Aviation

One of the most significant recent innovations has been the establishment of regular aviation transport to and through Sinkiang. A Eurasia Aviation Corporation line between Shanghai and T'a Ch'eng, opened in 1933, was the first step; but its use was necessarily curtailed by the outbreak of war in 1937. Not until October, 1939, did Eurasia, through the medium of the newly formed Sino-Soviet Aviation Company, open a new service. It ran from Chungking to Hami, whence, through the cooperation of Sinkiang authorities and the Soviet People's Aviation Company, it was continued via Tihwa, I-ning, and Alma-Ata (the latter over the border, in Soviet Kazakhstan) to Moscow. The trip from Chungking across Sinkiang to Alma-Ata totals about 2,584 miles and has become extremely important in United Nations mail and transport services.

Road Transportation

Most significant advances in the New Sinkiang have been those in the field of road transportation. The old caravan routes between China and Russia that run through Sinkiang have been readapted to modern truck travel. The only truck highway in Sinkiang before 1933 is said to have run only a short distance from the provincial capital, and there were then only some twenty military trucks in the whole area. But Ch'en Chi-jung has reported that by 1938 the following truck roads had been completed and put into use in North Sinkiang:

TRUCK ROADS IN NORTH SINKIANG, 1938

Main Roads	*Branch Lines*	*Termini*	*Distance Covered*
Ti-I		Tihwa and I-li (Sui-ting)	450 miles
Ti-Hsing		" " Hsing-hsing Hsia	470 "
Ti-T'a		" " T'a Ch'eng	430 "
	Ti-Tu	" " Turfan	
	Tu-Ch'i	Turfan and Ch'i-chio-ching	1,150 "
	T'a-Ch'eng	T'a Ch'eng and Ch'eng-hua	
Total Mileage ..			2,500 "

[p. 1119]

491
494 Repairs and reconstruction were in addition undertaken over more than 1,875 miles of what is called "dry line" between Tihwa and Khotan (running via Karashahr, Kucha, Aqsu, and Kashgar). A transport control office of the provincial government, which had over 400 trucks of its own in 1938, has maintained control and repair stations on every line and by that date well over the equivalent of $500,000 U.S. currency had been expended on such work. By 1941 it was reported that there were altogether 3,000 trucks engaged in Sinkiang transport work.

Truck transport that has connected Tihwa with Soviet Russia and with other parts of China ran principally from T'a Ch'eng (on the Russian border) through Tihwa to Hsing-hsing Hsia (on the border of Chinese Kansu Province). There has also been important South Sinkiang contact with Soviet Russia from Kashgar to Andizhan via the Terek Pass. On the Chinese side the Sinkiang road system mainly links up with routes that have been under the direction of the Chinese Northwest Highway Administration via the 800-mile Kansu-Sinkiang motor road, which runs from Hsing-hsing Hsia (Baboon Pass) to Lan-chou. The Northwest Highway Administration has had a force—of 1,500 trucks as well as 5,000 drivers and supplementary workers—which maintains lines ultimately connecting up with Chungking. The main Kansu line, a modernization of the old Imperial Caravan Road which used to bear traffic in camels and carts from Sinkiang to Pei-p'ing, represents plans and work extending over the years from 1935 to the present.

Traditionally less well developed and less practicable for truck transport are the caravan trails which lead from Sinkiang (in the south) to Ch'inghai and (in the north) to Mongolia. These have been regularly used for limited local commerce—particularly the stretch from Keriya via Cherchen to Wu-er[illegible]'eng in Western Ch'inghai—and have great truckage and rail possibilities for the future.

Some Recent Developments

206 A milestone in Sinkiang modernization was the opening of through telephone connections between Tihwa and Chungking. *Ta Kung Pao* correspondent Ch'en Chi-jung used the line when he was in Tihwa on

439 motor traffic under the name of Sinkiang-Suiyuan highway. In
491 1935 there were about fifty trucks or buses running on this high-
494 way, making four trips a month. The historical Great Northwest
195 highway has also been open to motor traffic since 1930. During the Sino-Japanese War, this traditional highway was one of the most important outlets of free China. It is reported that in the first half of 1942, some seventy million rubles worth of tea, tung oil, bristles, wool and other goods were exported from China to Russia through this route. On the other hand, there were some fifteen million rubles worth of dried goods, metal, canned goods and wine imported to China during the same period, together with an unidentified amount of weapons and war material that the Soviet Union sent to China under the 1939 Sino-Soviet Military Agreement. The total number of five-ton trucks used during the period was 3,600; but those actually in operation were only about a thousand. The total capacity, including camels, of that route was not more than two thousand tons per month. (Cf. Shina Shōbetsū Zenshi, Vol. 8, pp. 636-39. It must be taken into account that this is a Japanese source.)

195 Table V: Trade Between Sinkiang and Tientsin, 1930-32 average
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Description	Value (yüan)	
A. Exports:		5,298,900
sheep intestines	2,400,000	
furs and hides	2,809,000	
raisins	54,000	
medical herbs	17,200	
dried mushrooms	18,000	
B. Imports:		2,743,562
cigarettes and tobacco	808,720	
woolen cloth	104,550	
silk	223,600	
linen	285,200	
cotton goods	110,200	
medical herbs and drugs	84,730	
stationary and books	70,700	
hats and shoes	99,000	
tea	868,852	
leather goods	6,800	
cosmetics	28,350	
paints and dyes	1,200	
hardware	2,160	
seafood	4,100	
chinaware	1,560	
miscellaneous	2,240	
Grand Total		8,042,462

Source: Chung-kuo Ching-chi Nien-chien, 1935 ed., vol. 3, pp. 88-90.

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these proved to be gold-mines from which the sand, having been removed in baskets, provides a fair amount of gold-dust, after being washed out. In some places[1] the grit on which we walked was composed of minute granite fragments of every colour, and it was very interesting to notice that the little, grey, desert lizard, which had never left us all through our travels, had so accommodated itself to the soil in which it lived that its skin had become many-hued, like a beautiful mosaic, so that it was indistinguishable from the surrounding ground.

A large temple stood on an eminence not far from the ravine, and here we found the lamas, who had been as prompt as ourselves in quitting the camp, burning incense and making obeisance to the gods. The lamas expressed some surprise that we neither burned incense nor prostrated ourselves, nor sought the blessing of the Guardians of the Road by striking the temple bell with its wooden hammer to call their attention. We were the only travellers on that road who would dare to take such a journey without observing this ritual, and such an omission must be either a sign of impiety or that we enjoyed the protection of a power superior to any god in that temple. 'We never start on our day's journey without asking the blessing of God,' explained one of our carters, who two months previously would have been as unwilling as the lamas themselves to leave without the blessing of the Goddess of Mercy.

It was fortunate for us that this first journey, taken as it was by day, was not an abnormally long one, and by 10 p.m. we reached Shachüantz—'The Spring of the Sands'—but unfortunately it surpassed all the others we had hitherto sampled for the bad quality of its water, which was metallic as well as bitter and salt. The slabs of granite over which we had driven had,

1[Near Hsinghsinghsia -- Analyst]

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494 moreover, told badly on our cart-wheels, and one of the spokes had cracked; all the same we pushed on, resuming the night stages. The hour of departure was fixed for 6 p.m., so the whole party ate a meal at 4 p.m., after which the care of the animals, packing the carts and settling the inn account kept us busy until we left.

000 As soon as we were clear of the village, according to our habit, we enjoyed a time of reading aloud, the smooth, sandy roads keeping the cart so steady that without undue fatigue to the eyes we were easily able to do so. As daylight faded, however, we dismounted for our evening walk, which generally continued until darkness fell, for we had not our carters' gift of seeing by night. At this time of the year there were only about seven hours of darkness, yet always at sunset the icy chill seemed to rise from the surface of the sand, when everyone at once put on an extra garment. Then silence fell on the party, and the only sound heard was the rhythmic clang of the great camel bell which swung from the axle of our big cart. The crescent moon rose and set; we watched the great stars move slowly across the sky; on the horizon magnetic fires rose and fell, and when the driver touched the mules with his whip a flash of light appeared. The space, the silence, the darkness, the loneliness all produced a state of consciousness when the accepted values of life seemed readjusted, being found to be curiously different from those accepted by day in the busy throng. Day uttereth speech, but night showeth knowledge; and we have remained wiser women for the meditations of those Gobi nights.

494 312 Our carters had frequently made reference to a stage of unusual difficulty and length still lying ahead, and at Kushui—'The Spring of Bitter Water'

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—we found that we had reached it, and that 46 English miles still divided us from Kotzyentun— —'The Dove Tower'—which was the next oasis. We now occasionally met a convoy taking supplies to the troops, and at the 'Spring of Bitter Water' our carters were delighted to find a string of carts returning to Hami, whose drivers proposed to travel with us. So all started in good time together for the record march and made good progress until 1 a.m., when, without warning, two sections of the wheel rim detached themselves and fell to the ground. The situation would have been hopeless had it not been for our fellow-travellers, but now in the space of half an hour the Chinese evangelist came to an arrangement with one of the carters to transfer us and our baggage to his cart, the remainder of the party staying behind to patch up the wheel and to drag the empty vehicle somehow to the end of the appointed stage.

Meanwhile we jolted along, but before we reached 'The Dove Tower' the sun was high and the scorching heat was almost intolerable, for there was no cover and we were wholly unprotected from its rays. All the same on we jolted, sitting upon some mysterious boxes, which were the cargo of our new conveyance; but before long the aroma with which we seemed to be surrounded caused us to enquire what merchandise was being conveyed over this desert road. 'Dead mules,' was the answer. 'Two of mine have just died, so I have packed them into those boxes to sell for meat further down the road.' The end of the incident was, that we bought the meat, and promptly abandoned it!

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door the darkness is almost complete. Experience in travel, however, enables one to appreciate the fact that in this dark hole: 1. The rays of the sun being excluded, the traveller (whose only rest is taken by day) has a good chance of sleep; 2. The heat does not easily penetrate this earthen dwelling; 3. The darkness is so distasteful to flies that once the room is shut up they voluntarily leave by the hole in the roof; 4. The Gobi wind and swirling sand are as effectively excluded as possible; 5. The tired traveller may sleep as soundly as he pleases, there being no aperture through which a stealthy hand can introduce itself and abstract his goods while he slumbers.

We had been in bed for about three hours when we heard the sound of the derelict cart approaching the inn. It was quite unmistakable owing to the thud given each time when the injured portion of the wheel met the ground. There were a few deep groans from the driver; a brief conversation with the innkeeper; and then, silence while the exhausted men slept.

In the afternoon a council of war was held, and the Turki driver of our rescued conveyance was induced, for a moderate sum of money, to fill up his empty cart with the heavy luggage, which he undertook to deliver in Hami. There was no blacksmith nor wheelwright in the village, but a venerable Turki volunteered his amateur services, and by means of a length of rope, a few nails and the skilful use of an adze, before nightfall the wheel was so far repaired, that by letting the cart go empty we hoped to bring it in safety to Hami.

Our next night of travel brought us to the well-named oasis of Changliushui—'The Inexhaustible Spring.' As we approached by moonlight we suddenly caught sight of a tree, the first we had seen since leaving

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Ansi, and our own exhilaration was shared by the whole cavalcade. The tired mules shook their heads as they smelt the cool verdure, while the carter explained: 'Now our troubles are all over! We have come to sweet water!' Several of the inns were full, but we finally got rooms in a seemingly abandoned courtyard. The landlord was away from home, but a good deal of knocking brought his wife from her bed, and she consented to receive us. In a few minutes the sheep-dung fire was glowing, the water boiling, and we were drinking an ambrosial infusion-tea made with 'sweet water.'

A good number of families inhabited this oasis,[1] and we were now sufficiently far from the Kansu frontier for the normal conditions of travel and business to obtain once more. The various inn yards were full of peasants' carts bringing produce from Hami, and we were also able to buy fresh vegetables and a melon. We sat for several hours in the shade of the trees by the bubbling spring, talking with the women who came there to draw water. It was a restful spot, and it was with regret that we left it. The next dawn brought us to Hwanglukang—'The Hill of Yellow Reeds.' Here the character of the country changed, the village being situated in the midst of rolling steppes, where tall grass supplied abundant provender for cattle. In this place we saw the cattle all kneeling before tussocks of coarse grass which they had worn down to smooth hummocks with the rubbing of their necks. The appearance was very strange and gave the impression of an act of worship. In the afternoon we wandered out to see the village and its inhabitants, calling at the Mosque, where we found a venerable Ahung—courteous, dignified and friendly—surrounded by a group of little boys, to whom he was teaching the Koran. They were

1[Changliushui -- Analyst

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birds had made their nests. This was the most striking example of wind erosion that we saw.

This last stage had been taken in company with Mr. Hunter, whose little cart frequently made better stages than our heavy vehicles could manage. At this point we were all needing small repairs to our carts, and also the stony roads had become very heavy on the shoes of our teams, but Mr. Hunter now produced a travelling farrier's outfit, and with the help of his man shod the mules, greatly to the admiration of the Chinese by-standers, who commented freely on the resourcefulness of this experienced traveller. Mr. Hunter's man was a Mongolian youth, called 'Nimga.' The Living Buddha, to whom he was subject, had given him as an orphan boy to the missionaries. He always slept where he could watch the horses, and on one occasion, when he felt certain that horse-stealers were prowling around, lay down on a horse's back and slept there. His horsemanship was splendid, accustomed as he was to riding from infancy.

The Turki innkeeper, a tall, lean, bearded Moslem, looked with some suspicion at this party of foreigners. 'What have they come for?' he asked Mr. Hunter. 'Is it bones, plants or game that they want?' 'Nothing of the kind,' was the answer, 'these are missionaries.'

'Oh, that's different,' he grunted, 'but some of those who come, why there's no knowing what they want! There was a man here once upon a time, and his servant told me that he came to Chekulu in order to measure the distance to the sun! A likely tale! Couldn't he measure it in his own country? Surely you can *sometimes* see the sun in Western lands?'

For four hours that evening we descended a smooth, downhill road, and on reaching the plain entered a sandy basin about twenty miles across, the lower part

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in their comfortable houses. We bore witness in Kucheng, and then passed on.

CHAPTER XL

KUCHENG TO URUMCHI

BEFORE we left Suchow, relying on the correctness of travellers' information, we had comforted ourselves with the thought that Kucheng was to see the end of the most tedious part of our journey. 'The Governor's Express Cart Service takes you over six stages in a day and a half, that is, by travelling straight through, and only stopping long enough to change horses,' had said an enthusiastic native of Urumchi, but after many years' experience of Chinese roads we had ventured to doubt the possibility of maintaining this speed without broken bones and heads. 'Roads! but you have never seen any approaching those of "Kow Wai." Why, they are as smooth as the top of this table!' had been the answer. Therefore, nothing doubting, we had informed Mr. Hunter that when we reached Kucheng we intended going on by Express Cart, leaving the men to follow more slowly; but he shook his wise head, saying: 'I would not take such a risk if I were you! Do not fix anything until you have seen the style of the mail coach. *I* would not endanger *my* life in one of those contraptions.' We pressed the matter no further, especially as our Chinese escort had stared in blank amazement at the very notion of hiring a seat in one cart when we were already going to the expense of places in another, and he had added: 'A few more days on the road, what does it matter? Even a week more or less on a long journey is of little importance.'

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When we were about one mile from the gate of Kucheng, a yell was heard, and our men hastily drew up, saying, '*Kwai che lai liao*'—the Express is coming! and in a swirl of dust, and with a wild jingle of many harness bells, three long-limbed, bony horses galloped madly past under the lash of the driver, who, having just caught sight of the town entrance, was bringing his team through the city gate and up the main street at a pace calculated to impress the populace! It was then that we saw the body of the cart was simply made of long poles lashed together, on which two passengers, clinging to the framework, were being hurled from side to side by the violence of the jolting. One glance at the 'Express' quickly satisfied us that such a mode of travel, while excellent for postal parcels, would be hideous torture to ordinary human beings if nerves formed any part of their anatomy, while some might scarcely survive the fifty-four hours of this frenzied mode of dispatch.

From Kucheng onwards it was no longer necessary to make night stages. Hot as it was, the animals stood it well, as each midday brought us to a wayside foodshop, where we were able to get something for ourselves and water for the mules, and the nights were now spent in towns of some importance. The direction of the road was south-west, as we had reached our most northerly point at Kucheng, and we were now following the line of the Tian Shan towards the dip which marks the position of Urumchi. The highest peak of this part of the Tian Shan was now coming into sight, the great Bogdo-ola—'The Mount of God'—which rises twenty thousand feet, and is seen from a great distance. This summit, with its surrounding peaks, is of a grand and rugged shape, and lends distinction to the country which would be insignificant were it not for this arresting

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had to be considered for undertaking that portion of our long journey which still stretched in front. From Suchow to Urumchi we had already traversed one thousand five hundred miles, but seven hundred more miles still lay between us and Chuguchak, which is the last city in China, before crossing the Russian border. It was therefore necessary for us to buy as many Russian roubles as we should require, and in this we received assistance from the Chinese postmaster. The remainder of the road-journey now could best be taken in a Russian *tarantass*—a long, fourwheeled, springless cart, harnessed in Siberian style, with three horses abreast, and a gaily painted wooden hoop fastened to the shafts and standing high over the middle horse's head, to which several bells are attached. This mode of travel is far quicker than by Chinese cart, so we decided to sell all our mules (except, of course, Molly) together with both the carts, and proceed by the said hired tarantass. And now it was our turn to comb our mules' manes, plait our mules' tails and send them bravely forth to the horse fair wearing handsome, borrowed saddles, but with the proud knowledge that *we* had no sore backs to hide, and no underfed beasts to palm off on the unsuspecting purchasers! In due course all our animals were sold, while preparations were completed for our further travelling on to Chuguchak.

CHAPTER XLII

THROUGH FLY-LAND IN A TARANTASS

OUR departure was fixed for Thursday, August 26th, but the obstinate Turki driver, whose cart we had hired, was determined to force us to travel with a cavalcade

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of his friends who would not leave until Saturday. He therefore removed a wheel from the tarantass on the plea of necessary repairs, and by Friday at midday the wheelwright had not yet finished his job. It was only under the strong pressure brought by Mr. Hunter, who refused to leave the workshop until the wheel was mended, that Friday afternoon saw the empty tarantass rattle over the rough road and draw up at the side door of the Mission Compound.

Our personal luggage was very little, knowing, as we did, that when we reached the Siberian railway we must not carry more than regulation weight. We were also advised not to take books, papers, letters, nor photographs into Russia. Our cameras, consequently, were left behind, as also our organ, and all personal effects beyond a hand-valise each, and a wadded quilt for bedding. It was well for Mr. Mather that this delay had occurred, for it was not until sunset on the Thursday that he even began to ram a few things into a kitbag in view of the journey.

The food-box was royally supplied by gifts from the generous Urumchi people, who vied with one another in making this an opportunity to express their appreciation of the two men who had lived and worked in their midst for so many years. The Governor sent us an ample supply of tinned food for the road, and of tea, sugar, cake, biscuits, bread and candles there was more than we could carry. Russian friends had sent cakes and a supply of delicious conserves, the like of which are met in no country but Russia, made from mountain strawberries, which are plentiful in Urumchi.

The men who had accompanied us from Suchow were now very anxious to return, so we had made an application for a passport to enable them to cross through Hsinghsinghsia. Naturally, all concerned felt great

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journey. It was hard for our driver to restrain his horses until we had taken leave, and no sooner was the final word 'ping-an tsai'—'peace be with you'—spoken, than he scrambled to his seat, lashed his team, and instantly the horses sprang forward, breaking into a quick trot. They proved to be in good condition, and we found that travelling by tarantass was comfortable, and indeed far less wearying than by Chinese cart. Moreover we were able to cover six miles per hour at a steady pace, exactly doubling our former speed, the seven hundred miles to Chuguchak[1] being accomplished in a fortnight, whereas by Chinese cart it would have been a journey of twenty-two days. The roads were good, and the jingling bells, the gaily-painted circus hoop, and the freely-harnessed, trotting horses made a cheerful *ensemble*, while at each half-stage there was a wayside inn where we could buy hot water and make tea.

Mr. Hunter had, at the last moment, decided also to come with us as far as Chuguchak. His little ammunition-cart was, therefore, like our own tarantass, laden to its uttermost capacity. Mr. Mather used his own horse, while Nimga rode by Mr. Hunter's cartside. There was a great deal of traffic on the road, carts of merchandise from Russia and Ili constantly passing us. On the first day we met twelve carts laden with tin and galvanised iron pails, such as are so popular on the Urumchi market, and without which no traveller moves; matches, sugar, and leather formed the cargo of many others. It was long after dark when we reached the first inn at Changki. Every room was occupied, and the courtyard was full of vehicles laden with grain, cotton and water-melons. Each driver was sleeping near his merchandise, and the stalls were crowded with beasts that kicked, squealed, and bit at each other throughout the night. Seeing that there was no

[1] [From Urumchi -- Analyst]

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be a Qazaq. She wore a printed cotton gown to her ankles, and over it a striped coat, cut with an old-fashioned waistline, and down the back seam the stripes met in fishbone pattern, while her head and face were swathed in the nunlike headgear worn by all Qazaq women. A call from our driver brought an acquiescing response from her, and he drew up as she now moved toward the great mound of drying cow-dung, which is the inevitable adjunct to the Qazaq home. Her fireplace was of the simplest, a deep hole hollowed in the ground, and three iron rods and a hook, from which a kettle hung. She dexterously placed the cakes of cow dung on the embers, and blowing on them, in a short time there was a glowing fire and a singing kettle. One of her children was seen carrying water from the spring, while the other was collecting fuel, but both now came running to see us. Accepting her invitation we entered the tent, and here found her husband, a Honan man, lying down with the hateful opium pipe by his side. Nevertheless, with the manners of a gentleman, he at once rose, spread a carpet for us, and with a gesture placed his pipe at our disposal, but adding as he did so: 'You have none of these bad habits in your country.' We sat and talked with this intelligent man, who for some unknown reason had left China, wandered across the desert, and thrown in his lot with the Qazaq people, taking one of their women to be his wife and the mother of his children. Another of these enigmatic people gathered in this strangest of countries, where a man's past is known only to himself, to be buried and forgotten.

While we were talking Sandy Macnab was working. Producing a length of cotton material, of suitable size and shape to fit between the shafts of his cart, he proceeded to fasten it so as to form a feeding trough, in

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which he mixed the fodder for his horses, for these fine animals could only cover the long stages required of them by dint of great care and good feeding. This he gave them, and their good condition was a daily satisfaction to us. The friendliness between our driver and ourselves was becoming so warm that on an occasion such as this he was not only willing to borrow the teapot but the tea also! After an hour's rest we moved on, and by the late afternoon passed a lonely enclosure occupied by two Turki. The high hills around we knew to be the shelter of reckless robber-bands, and Mr. Hunter had firmly declared that we must at all costs push on to Kweitun by nightfall; Sandy, however, was differently disposed, and before he could be stopped he drove his team into the enclosure, and untied the circus hoop. We as a party, however, absolutely refused to dismount, and finally Nimga turned the horses' heads and led them out of the courtyard, when the stubborn Macnab was compelled to follow. For the next few hours he sang for our benefit sundry weird chants which, sounding as they did, so much like imprecatory liturgies, caused us to ask him what he was singing. 'Singing to Huda (God)' was his reply, and we knew that our surmise was correct—he was calling down vengeance on this party of Gentiles.

After a night in Yamatu we left on another forty-seven mile stage. The road at first was up and down hill, like a switchback, and as the long body of the tarantass makes it quite unsuited to sharp bends, we walked over the more dangerous parts. This proceeding greatly annoyed Macnab, but later on when we met a party whose faces were cut and bleeding from a spill, he had to admit that we were in the right. At midday we halted by another Qazaq tent. As soon as the owners sighted us they came forward to ask if any